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12 March 1951

My dear Mr. Secretary:

A letter of recent date from Dr. Luther H. Evans, Librarian of Congress, has called my attention to the steps which are currently being taken under the leadership of the Department of Commerce toward control of the export of technical information to the Soviet Orbit. This is a matter in which the Central Intelligence Agency, as well as the rest of the Intelligence community, has a vital interest. CIA strongly favors a program to restrict the flow to the USSR and the Satellites of technical information which will benefit their war-making potential. We are concerned, however, that the means employed to achieve this control shall be such as to be practicable and to have the possibility of effectiveness. In the interests of our National security, we must be sure also that they do not work to the detriment of our own intelligence position.

In this country, the great bulk of our technical literature is freely available, while in the USSR the flow of information is controlled, and should this Government impose stringent measures affecting the exchange of openly published scientific and technical information, it is possible that the Soviet Union would take steps in reprisal which would be far more effective than any controls short of full censorship which we could impose.

It is true that the flow of technical data from the U. S. to the Soviet Bloc is much greater than our intake. Ineffective efforts at control, however, might result in a stoppage of such material as we are now receiving, without preventing them from securing any material freely available in this country. Furthermore, while our restrictions might be solely on scientific

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and technical information, reprisal by the Soviet Union would undoubtedly carry far beyond this into the fields of economic, political, and sociological information. Intelligence has a vital interest in receiving the maximum amount of information in all of these fields. As Russian security restrictions progressively limit the intake from our normal reporting channels, greater dependence must be placed on information gained from published sources.

In the light of my responsibility, therefore, I wish to ask your cooperation in assuring that any regulations or policies which may emerge from the Export Control Program will be so framed that the intelligence interests of the Government in Soviet literature will be protected to the maximum amount possible, and that the risks to our National security through Soviet reprisal will be carefully considered. It is my belief that imposition of an embargo on publicly available technical data at this time would be ill advised, and that better results or less risk would result from government-sponsored cooperation by industry, scientific societies and publishers in voluntarily reducing the flow of technical publications to the Soviet orbit.